

million Americans would lose their health insurance as a result of the bill—because it would mean that the minute all of this happened, people would struggle to get quality healthcare services.

In addition to the 23 million who are going to lose it because of the plan the Republican majority passed in the House, in my home State of Colorado—and I do not think it is very different from a lot of places in this regard—half of the people who are on Medicaid are kids. Are they supposed to go to work, or do we want them in school and having the benefit of a healthcare program?

Do we expect seniors in long-term care to go back to work? There are millions of Americans who are living in nursing homes, having spent their entire life savings for the privilege of being in long-term care or in nursing homes that are paid for by Medicaid. What are they supposed to do? Are we going to empty out the nursing homes in the United States?

I think, to some extent or another—I always get into trouble with my staff every time I say this, but I am going to say this again here—every one of us in this Senate is a conservative if “conservative” means to protect the institutions of our government and to think carefully before we leap. There is nothing conservative about this proposal on Medicaid. It is a radical proposal—a 20-percent Medicaid cut. We have not seen anything like that in our history.

What is amazing about this budget is not just that the math does not add up but that its targets are shockingly clear: rural communities, vulnerable Americans, vital investments in our future. This budget slams communities that are already hurting in our economy. Farmers would face a 21-percent cut to the Department of Agriculture, meaning less help to fight erosion, protect water quality, and improve irrigation. The budget eliminates the TIGER Grant Program entirely, which builds roads, bridges, and train stations all across the country. It cuts the maintenance budget for the U.S. Forest Service by over 70 percent, making it harder to maintain the trails and facilities that support rural outdoor economies.

I invite anybody here and I would welcome anybody to come visit Colorado. That is not a hardship; it is a beautiful place. See the condition that our national forests are in and the work that needs to be done and the conditions under which employees of the Forest Service are being asked to do their jobs. It is not right. It is not fair.

This budget eliminates essential air service which helps connect our most remote areas. Besides water, it is probably the most important lifeblood of our rural communities. It cuts assistance to State and volunteer fire departments, exposing our mountain towns to even greater risk. This is a horrible budget for rural America—horrible.

This budget also turns its back on families who are struggling the most. It eliminates support to heat low-income homes through the winter. That is the reason Democrats and Republicans do not support this budget. It cuts safety inspections for coal miners, while devastating support to fight pollution and clean up toxic sites that disproportionately harm poor communities. It cuts assistance to the homeless and community development block grants—ends it—which promote affordable housing and economic development in low-income areas. It slashes food stamps by 25 percent. It is like the Grinch himself wrote this budget. Nearly half of those who benefit from that program are children—poor children.

This budget not only ignores our duty to ensure that kids in poverty do not go hungry, it also fails to invest in their future. This budget cuts education funding by \$9 billion. It slashes afterschool and summer programs for low-income children. It cuts funds to help teachers become better teachers. It cuts programs to help students work their way through college.

There is not anybody in America who thinks it is right that we are bankrupting families and students because of the high cost of college, which is something that their parents and grandparents did not have to endure because of choices we made then that we are not making today.

Who in his right mind thinks an answer to that is to cut work-study programs? Yet that is in the budget. It takes aim at our next generation. The budget targets next-generation research and technology that we need in order to compete in the 21st century. It slashes funds to the National Science Foundation.

Do you want a reason as to why Republicans and Democrats do not support this budget—why we have bipartisan opposition for it? It is that it cuts the NIH, the National Institutes of Health, by \$8 billion even though its research supported over 330,000 jobs and \$60 billion in economic activity just last year. It cuts research for low-cost, clean energy even though experts predict nearly \$8 trillion of global investment in renewable energy over the next 25 years. It devastates the Department of Energy's loan program that spurs private investment and pays for itself.

Believe me, I have worked in every level of government. I have been in the private sector, too, and I know there is waste in every level of government. There is waste in the Federal Government. There are programs that make no sense, and there are decisions we make that make no sense. We need to strive every day to become better stewards of taxpayer dollars. I do not think we do a good enough job in this place of oversight, of how taxpayer dollars are being used. Yet this budget does not target waste, and this budget does not target fraud and abuse; it targets who

we are as a nation and what we hope for, for the next generation.

In these times, the American dream is not something we can take for granted. It is the product of choices our forbearers have made and choices we have made—choices to invest in the future, to look out for one another and ensure that all Americans have opportunities to make the most of their God-given potential.

Budgets are more than just dollars and cents; they answer important questions about our vision for the future and our values as Americans. In that sense, it is worth considering how this budget would affect the everyday lives of Americans—of the people who come to our townhalls or the people who are too busy working, trying to provide for their families, to be able to go to our townhalls.

If this budget were to pass, a working mom might lose healthcare for herself and have to worry that her aging mother might not be far behind. She might have to cut back hours at work to pick up her kid whose afterschool program was just canceled. Driving home, she will wonder whether her child's weeklong cough has anything to do with the air he is breathing or the water he is drinking or whether that dinner was the last of the groceries for the month even though it is only the 25th.

These are the choices our constituents are going to face, and that is not the future we want. It is not an America we would choose for our kids.

(Mr. BLUNT assumed the Chair.)

I am wrapping up here. I know my colleague from Louisiana is here.

The most expensive thing for us to do is to give up on working people, our kids, and on urban and rural communities that are too often forgotten by people in Washington. That, I am afraid, is what this budget does—it gives up. In a sober analysis on real solutions to our problems and our basic commitment to each other, we are as fellow citizens bound by a common destiny, but this does not meet the test.

I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats, together, to write a budget that actually reflects the will of the American people. I look forward to working with the Presiding Officer and my colleague from Louisiana, who is doing such good work on healthcare.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. CASSIDY. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Colorado for his kind words.

I rise to speak about our Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act. I always kind of chuckle when I say the “Affordable Care Act,” as I have a friend back home whose quote for his insurance was \$39,000 for 1 year. That is the un-Affordable Care Act.

A family member from San Francisco whose policy was \$20,000 for 1 year had a \$6,000 deductible for each person. I think her husband actually voted for BERNIE SANDERS, but she is like: The heck with this because I cannot afford it.

Then there is another fellow here in Washington, DC, who is an insurance consultant. If anybody can get a good deal, an insurance consultant should be able to. He says:

My family premium is \$24,000 a year with a family deductible of \$13,000. We will pay \$37,000 before we receive benefit from our insurance policy.

That is unsustainable.

President Trump saw that during the campaign. He said over and over again—kind of his four pledges, if you will—that he wished to maintain coverage, lower premiums, get rid of those mandates that Americans hate in ObamaCare, and care for those with preexisting conditions. This is what he said over and over. It is a great pledge.

He actually said something else as well: He said he wanted to make healthcare easy. Now we have an approach to do this. Some people call it auto enrollment, but I call it making it easy. In this way, we can increase coverage and achieve the goals of President Trump's to lower the premiums. We are using something that is already used in Medicare and 401(k) plans. Again, we make it easy to enroll. Let me elaborate on this.

People argue that we have to have a mandate because without a mandate, people will lose coverage, and if people lose coverage, only the sick enroll and healthcare expenses increase. I think the Senate actually has an opportunity to do something better. We can make it easy. Under this, we can imagine that someone is eligible to be enrolled in our program unless he calls us up and says he does not want to be.

This is what we do in Medicare. When we—when I, when you, when any of us—turn 65, we are automatically enrolled in Medicare. I turned 65, and I am on Medicare. It is not a mandate. I can call them up and say that I do not want to. You have never heard anybody complain about it. It is just called making it easy.

Similarly, when a Fortune 500 company puts in a 401(k) plan, it has learned that if it asks somebody to sign all of the forms, and they can opt into its 401(k) retirement plan, it gets about 65 percent participation, but if they say: You are in unless you call us up and tell us you do not want to be—if they make it totally easy, they get 95 percent participation in that 401(k) program.

We know both from Medicare and from business that if you make enrollment easy, you have 95 percent participation. Now, that is so good in the setting of this because if we have all of those enrolled who are eligible to join the ObamaCare replace plan, we make that insurance pool large.

We call it a pool for a reason. If you pour a cup of water into an ocean, it

does nothing to the level of the ocean. Similarly, if you have one person who is ill who is in a big pool of otherwise healthy people, it does nothing to the expense because the expense of that one person's illness is spread over many. So by making enrollment easy—fulfilling President Trump's pledge—just like the ocean with one cup of water, that one person who is sick, the expense spread out over many, the impact on any one person's premium is nil.

By the way, there is a lot of conservative support for this sort of concept. First let me just say that coverage is important. If we pretend that people having coverage is not important, it is just not true. I am a physician. I can tell my colleagues there are many conversations I have had where someone who was poorly insured or uninsured might need some critical medicine or critical procedure and we had to work, scramble, do everything we could to get her the coverage she needed to have sometimes a lifesaving procedure.

Rich Lowry is a conservative columnist for the National Review. He had a column saying that the worst argument against replacing the Affordable Care Act is that coverage is not important. Coverage is important.

If we go on toward this kind of concept—make healthcare enrollment easy; you are in unless you are out—Jim Capretta, Joe Antos, and Stuart Butler have all spoken about using this concept. Nina Owcharenko and Bob Moffit of the Heritage Foundation wrote in Senator JOHN MCCAIN's Presidential plan in 2008 that it would be accompanied by a system of automatic enrollment of health insurance, either at the workplace—and then they go on. But they were praising the Presidential candidate's—but now Senator JOHN MCCAIN's—employment of let's make it easy to enroll.

By the way, President Trump kind of emphasized this. Just before he was inaugurated on January 15, he gave an interview to the Washington Post and he was talking about his proposed healthcare law. We have already mentioned the components that he said were in it. He wanted all covered, caring for those with preexisting conditions, getting rid of the mandates, and lowering premiums, but he added this: People under his law “can expect to have great healthcare. It will be in a much more simplified form. Much less expensive, and much better.”

I like that: simplified.

Under ObamaCare, we have like 16 pages online that people have to fill out with all their W-2s with them in order to find out if they are eligible. The patients I saw in a hospital for the uninsured where median income may have been \$16,000, people lived in perhaps public housing, they took public transportation to the public library in order to log on because they did not have a home computer, much less internet. That is not simple. That is why enrollment numbers are lower for lower incomes. We make it easy.

Let me just emphasize one more time: If we can get that bigger pool of people, premiums fall. So for my family member in San Francisco who can't afford that premium, if we get that pool bigger, premiums fall. Similarly for the insurance consultant here or my friends back home in Louisiana, if we can make that pool bigger by making enrollment easier, their premiums will fall.

I will just say that I call myself a kitchen table conservative. All those conservative families who voted for Donald Trump, who sit down at their kitchen table and they know they can't afford a \$20,000 premium and already they are struggling with their car note, their house note; they have given up sending their kids to a private school; they are doing whatever they can to make ends meet. Under the un-Affordable Care Act, they are required to pay so much. When they heard President Trump say that he would lower their premiums, they saw that as a lifeline for their family budget. Their vote for President Trump was a cry for help: Help us with insurance premiums we cannot afford.

Now, as a kitchen table conservative myself, to those families who voted for Republican candidates over the last several elections but who absolutely know they need help with their health insurance, we have a solution for them.

But let me pause for a second. You don't have to be a conservative to care for this solution. In fact, people on the left have actually endorsed this concept as well.

I will end by saying this. As we come up with a replacement plan for the Affordable Care Act, it will not be a Republican solution and it will not be a Democratic solution. At its best, it will be an American solution—an American solution for that family at the kitchen table, struggling to pay their premiums, who can't do so now but know that they need coverage. In so doing, if we can fulfill President Trump's campaign pledges to cover all, caring for those with preexisting conditions, eliminating mandates, and lowering premiums by making enrollment easy through something called auto enrollment, we will have done our job.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM DAUSTER

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have two words for Bill Dauster: Thank you.

Thank you, Bill Dauster, for your brilliant mind and unwearying service to the U.S. Senate, to the American people, and to America's most noble ideals.

Thank you for your good humor, and thank you for your endless supply of good ideas.

The Senate is going to miss you.

In Steven Spielberg's Movie “Lincoln,” with Daniel Day-Lewis, there is a scene in which President Lincoln is talking with Congressman Thaddeus Stephens of Pennsylvania, played by Tommy Lee Jones.